Case 3623

Grallaria fenwickorum Barrera et al., 2010 (Aves, FORMICARIIDAE): proposed replacement of an indeterminate holotype by a neotype

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Abstract. The purpose of this application, under Article 75.5 of the Code, is to replace the incomplete and improperly described holotype of the antpitta *Grallaria fenwickorum* Barrera et al., 2010 with a neotype that constitutes a full, diagnosable, name-bearing type. Because the holotype of *G. fenwickorum* was described poorly, was not deposited appropriately in a scientific collection and does not possess the characters that diagnose the taxon, and because the taxonomy of *Grallaria* ranks among the most fluid of all avian genera, it is crucial that a full, information-rich, recognizable type be available to the scientific community to represent this new taxon. I consider *G. fenwickorum* to be a nomen dubium and urge declaration of a neotype as a basis for a more stable foundation in the complex taxonomy of this genus.

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; Aves; FORMICARIIDAE; *Grallaria fenwickorum*; *Grallaria urraoensis*; antpitta; Colombia.

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1. A previously undescribed taxon of *Grallaria* Vieillot, 1816 (Aves, FORMICARIIDAE) was detected recently in Colombia by a series of investigators, and two separate descriptions were published in 2010, causing considerable controversy and debate (e.g. Cadena & Stiles, 2010; Regalado, 2011). The description of the new taxon under the name *G. fenwickorum* (Barrera et al., 2010) antedated the name *G. urraoensis* (Carantón-Ayala & Certuche-Cubillos, 2010) by only 37 days, which nonetheless made the latter name a junior synonym of the former. Although the circumstances of the accelerated description of *G. fenwickorum* are unsatisfactory, the Barrera et al. (2010) description appears to establish a valid name in the literature. In this contribution, however, indicate several substantive problems with the description of *G. fenwickorum*, such that it is here considered to be a nomen dubium, and replacement of the inadequate holotype with a neotype is proposed.

2. Code Recommendation 72D indicates that holotypes should be labeled clearly, such that their status as types is unmistakable. In the case of *G. fenwickorum*, parts of the holotype (14 feathers from the wing, tail, and body of the individual) were deposited at the Museo de Historia Natural Jose Celestino Mutis, Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de Pamplona, Colombia, but some ambiguity regarding the holotype of *G. fenwickorum* is evident in the description. Whereas some paragraphs suggest that the holotype is the sample of feathers, others suggest that the holotype is the original bird. For example, an entire paragraph justifies the sample of feathers as an appropriate holotype (p. 10) but the 'Description of the holotype'

(p. 11) is entirely based upon the original bird, not the sample of feathers. Note that, although the description cites 'Article 74.1.4' (probably an error for Article 73.1.4) of the Code as indicating the description's Figure 1, and the cover illustration of the issue of *Conservación Colombiana* in which it appeared, as a holotype, Article 72.5.6 also makes clear that the holotype is the specimen per se, and not the illustration. The feathers were reportedly obtained from the bird in the photograph.

3. Problems with this holotype include the following: (a) The feathers were labelled only as 'Grallariidae Grallaria sp.', with no indication that these constituted a holotype (Diego J. Lizcano, Universidad de Pamplona, pers. comm. 25 March 2011); (b) the catalog number indicated in the description ('tissue collection No.699') appears to have originated with the authors of the description, as the Universidad de Pamplona has neither a cataloguing system, nor for that matter any organized systematic collections (Diego J. Lizcano, Universidad de Pamplona, pers. comm. 25 March 2011); (c) the data reported as associated with the holotype are incomplete, in that the sex of the individual was not provided (see Recommendation 73C.3; this information was unavailable because the individual was not sacrificed and because *Grallaria* antpittas are not sexually dimorphic), and in that the name of the 'collector' was not given (see Recommendation 73C.5; only the persons who released the individual are named in the description). Finally, and most significant; (d) because the holotype consists only of 14 feathers, and given poor selection of those feathers, the taxon is not diagnosable based on the holotype specimens. The description of *G. fenwickorum* indicates that the features that diagnose it as distinct from the closely related *G. milleri* Chapman, 1912 are the coloration of the back and breast. However, no feathers were drawn from the back of the individual and the only breast feathers were down feathers, rather than the contour feathers that might conceivably have been diagnostic. In other words, although a verbal diagnosis was provided that referred to the illustration, the actual holotype (i.e. the parts of the animal that are candidates to constitute the holotype according to Article 72.5.6) is not sufficient to distinguish this individual from other *Grallaria* species, in particular from *G. milleri*.

4. Here attention is focused on the proper documentation and typification of this taxon in the light of the highly volatile nature of *Grallaria* taxonomy. Indeed, this genus has arguably seen as many new species descriptions as any in all of Aves (except the tapaculo genus *Scytalopus*) in recent years (e.g. Stiles, 1992; Krabbe et al., 1999). Although some new *Grallaria* taxa are described as full species, as in the case at hand, others have been described as subspecies (e.g. Salaman et al., 2009). Clearly, careful consideration of species limits and comparability of species taxa is in order for this genus, a process that will only be confused by poor typification of the taxa involved. To address Article 75.3.2, I refer to the detailed descriptions of full specimens (paratypes of *G. fenwickorum*, and including the same specimen proposed as a neotype in this contribution) provided elsewhere (Carantón-Ayala & Certuche-Cubillos, 2010).

5. As indicated above (paragraph iii), the holotype of *G. fenwickorum* was not identified and characterized in sufficient detail, and is in fact indeterminate with insufficient characters to diagnose this taxon. This situation leads me to propose *G. fenwickorum* as a nomen dubium; as the holotype corresponding to the name is fixed in the original publication (Article 72.3 of the Code); I propose to designate a neotype. Conveniently two complete specimens are available that diagnose it fully

and appropriately (Carantón-Ayala & Certuche-Cubillos, 2010). As these specimens were cited and discussed in the description of *G. fenwickorum*, no doubt exists that they refer to the same taxon and that they were collected from very close to the original type locality. These specimens are appropriately designated as to their status as name-bearing types (for the junior synonym *G. urraoensis* Carantón-Ayala & Certuche-Cubillos, 2010), and are already deposited and catalogued in the ornithological collections of the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Universidad Nacional de Colombia (ICN-MHN), Bogotá, Colombia—the proposed neotype is ICN-MHN catalogue number 36689, and the paratype is ICN-MHN catalogue number 36688. It is hoped by many in the ornithological community that such incomplete descriptions of new species taxa (Smith et al., 1991; Athreya, 2006) will cease, in favour of more rigorous, careful, well-documented, and responsible additions to avian nomenclature; when appropriate specimen material is not available, the new taxon can be 'described' but less formally and without application of a name, which would be a more responsible approach.

6. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

(1) to use its plenary power to set aside all type fixations for the nominal species *fenwickorum* Barrera et al., 2010, as published in the binomen *Grallaria fenwickorum*, and to designate specimen ICN-MHN 36689 at the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales, Universidad Nacional de Colombia (ICN-MHN), Bogotá, Colombia, as the neotype;

(2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *fenwickorum* Barrera et al., 2010, as published in the binomen *Grallaria fenwickorum* and as defined by the neotype designated in (1) above.

Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge comments and discussions provided by the following colleagues, who may not agree with the conclusions but enriched my view of the situation: S. Claramunt, Kimberly Bostwick, Andrés Cuervo, Michael Engel, Kirsten Jensen, Vitor de Q. Piacentini, James V. Remsen and Mark Robbins.

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Acknowledgement of receipt of this application was published in BZN **70**: 70.

Comments on this case are invited for publication (subject to editing) in the *Bulletin*; they should be sent to the Executive Secretary, I.C.Z.N., c/o Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. (e-mail: iczn@nhm.ac.uk).